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DE RUEHSB #0019/01 0141212  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5297  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 3246  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 3357  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1780  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2614  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2984  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 0045  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0047  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0074  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2515  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000019

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BRIAN WALCH  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN  
NEW DELHI FOR POLITICAL OFFICER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/14/2020

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL WITH INDIAN AMBASSADOR  
TO ZIMBABWE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES A. RAY FOR REASONS 1.4 d

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SUMMARY  
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[11.](#) (C) In a meeting on January 13, Indian ambassador to Zimbabwe Ashok Venkatesan told the Ambassador that India has had a relationship with Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF that dates to the independence struggle, and Mugabe had a personal relationship with Indira Gandhi. The GOI takes a neutral stance toward the parties now, however, and there has not been a ministerial-level visit to Harare since 1993. Until the political situation improves, there is not likely to be one. Venkatesan concentrates his efforts on keeping Zimbabwe-India business relationships smooth. END SUMMARY.

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INDIAN POLICY, NEUTRAL - BUT . . .  
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[12.](#) (C) The Ambassador met with Indian Ambassador Ashok Venkatesan on January 13 at the Indian Embassy in Harare. Venkatesan has been at post for just over one year. He said that India has had a relationship with Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF since before 1980 during the war for independence. The Indian Government's current policy is to remain neutral in the affairs of Zimbabwe, not publicly supporting or criticizing either party. He pointed out, though, that there has been no ministerial-level visit to Harare from India since 1993, and until the political situation improves there is not likely to be one. He has not even been able to get Delhi to agree to a visit from the Vice-Ministerial level, even as India provides support for some IT and other projects.

[13.](#) (SBU) India's view is that business is business, and while business interests here are minimal, he tries to keep the business cooperation smooth. The ethnic Indian community here has fallen from nearly 15,000 to between 5 - 6,000, mainly the very old and the very young. Indians in the 20-40 age range have largely emigrated to Canada, Europe, the U.S., and South Africa, and have no plans to return. The Indian

expatriate community of around 500 is engaged in only a few businesses, the primary one being a cotton factory that provides inputs to cotton farmers, buys their crop, and then produces cotton fiber and cottonseed oil for sale. During 2006-2008, the oil production facility was subject to excessive government intervention, with the GOZ demanding that it sell its production locally at artificially low and unprofitable prices.

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NO SHONA CULTURAL IDENTITY  
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¶4. (C) Venkatesan described Mugabe and the dominant Shona of Zimbabwe as transplants to this land, like the jacaranda tree, an import from South America that has become pervasive - similar to kudzu and armadillos in the southern United States. They have no real traditional cultural roots. He also said that the people here, like the tree, are extremely quiescent and undemanding. He said he wonders if Mugabe ever gives any consideration to his legacy, and whether or not he Qgives any consideration to his legacy, and whether or not he wants what is best for the country. But, he added, the lack of cultural roots causes some irrational behavior; with many in ZANU-PF saying that they are the bright jewels of the region and should be respected for it - "the most beautiful bride at the wedding," apparently unaware of how outsiders view them.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Venkatesan noted that Zimbabweans don't even know the true origins of the ruins at the Great

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Zimbabwe, which were here when the Shona entered from East Africa and settled on land that was essentially vacant. An interesting twist on ZANU-PF's view of truth; there have been some articles claiming that the ruins were built by Mugabe's ancestors - with total disregard to the fact that most of the people here know it to be a blatant falsehood. END COMMENT.

RAY